

# THE Transport Worker

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## ROSS WILSON FAREWELLED



Ross leaves the CTU presidency for the ACC.

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## CRITICAL ELECTION

RMTU president Jim Kelly gives Union members his advice for the 2008 elections.



Pages 6 & 7



## HILLSIDE

Some great working shots from Hillside workshop.

Pages 10 & 11

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## Conference report 2007

# Tackling the big issue



*RMTU Conference delegates and observers*

**A** strong political focus dominated this year's RMTU national conference. Delegates were at times clearly frustrated with aspects of the Government's performance but a clear theme emerged; that a change of government could only be worse.

Transport Safety Minister Harry Duynhoven set the



*Transport Safety Minister Harry Duynhoven*

scene when he opened the conference at the Porirua Police College. He predicted a tough election battle for Labour next year, and contrasted the Government's record with that of the previous National regime.

Later, conference delegates heard from Mike Smith a former trade unionist and general secretary of the Labour Party, who outlined the benefits of continued affiliation. Affiliated unions could further their issues through the party's structures, he said, influence

*Maritime New Zealand's Lynn Irving and Bruce Maroc.*



the selection of candidates and help keep the party true to its trade union origins. The challenge for next year's election was to boost voter turnout, which would improve Labour's vote.

Since its election in 1999, the Labour-led coalition government had repealed the Employment Contracts Act, introduced the Health and Safety in Employment Act, re-nationalised ACC, increased the minimum wage several times, boosted industry training and legislated four weeks' minimum leave and 14 weeks' paid parental leave.

The conference subsequently considered a remit to put the question of political affiliation to a national referendum. The proposal was resoundingly defeated

*Continued on the next page*



# RMTU – NZ's Largest Specialist Transport Union

## Conference report 2007 continued

after delegates considered the implications of handing over the conference's role as the Union's principal policy-making body to referenda.

President Jim Kelly, in his annual report, focused on the 2008 Election, and the importance of political involvement by members.

"We encourage our union members and their families to be active politically," he said. "It is not only a right, but a responsibility. This includes taking part in the most fundamental of democratic acts, that of voting." He reminded delegates that in the last election one in five people on the electoral roll did not vote.

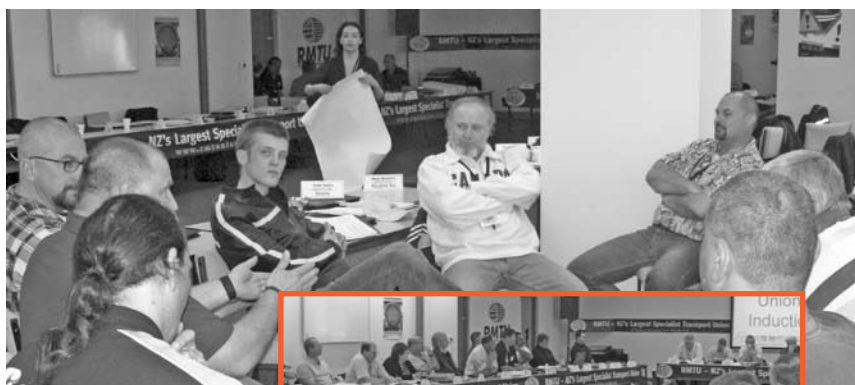
"We have to work with our members to make sure they are on the electoral roll and that they understand the key issues and debates leading up to the election; and that they are active in seeking answers from candidates on the issues that matter most to them.

"I am sure that New Zealanders don't want to go back to the days of the 1980s and 1990s when the disparity between rich and poor grew faster than in any other OECD country.

"Those of us with longer memories will remember the 'decent society' which National campaigned on in 1990, we mustn't be conned again."

The political message continued in a presentation by industrial organiser Brian Cronin, who reminded delegates 'The past always walks before us' – the importance of remembering the lessons of history. Brian had gathered recent National policy statements and quotes to show that a National-led government would be a return "back to the ECA days with attacks on working people, sale of assets, etc".

Australian union guests talked about how unions across the Tasman were confronting the anti-union 'Work Choices' legislation. Wayne Forno of the Transport Workers Union said the challenge was to lift conditions in the B grade companies that were competing and taking work from those with unionised workforces. The union had taken to negotiating common-law agreements with employers, to avoid the legal restrictions on including



*Conference delegates at work*



*C3 (formerly Toll Owens) CEO Sean Bolt is thanked by Hayden Smith*



*(l) Hazel Armstrong  
Law lawyer  
Ben Thompson and (r)  
Hazel Armstrong*



*TWU NSW  
assistant  
secretary Wayne  
Forno and  
organiser Steve  
Novak*

clauses such as union rights provisions in employment contracts.

Athough politics dominated, the theme for this year's conference was "Organising for Unity and Power – Back to Basics". General secretary Wayne Butson reminded delegates that the strength of the Union lay not with its organising staff but with on-the-ground organising and recruitment at delegate and shop floor level.

Guest speakers included transport industry heavyweights David Jackson of Toll NZ, William Peet (Ontrack), Don Parker of UGR and Sean Bolt of C3 (formerly Toll Owens). Solicitor Ben Thompson provided an educational session on 'Your rights to refuse unsafe work' and Hazel Armstrong



*Helen Kelly - CTU president*

outlined the history of ACC and why privatising the scheme would be a mistake.

Two RMTU stalwarts who are retiring soon, national vice-president Ian Wilkie and Timaru Port branch secretary Dusty Miller, were awarded life memberships.





*Toll NZ CEO  
David  
Jackson*



*United Group Rail Limited CEO  
Don Parker*



*RTBU South  
Australia sec-  
retary Ashley  
Waddell*



*Maritime  
Union of  
Australia  
deputy national  
secretary Jim  
Tannock  
addresses the  
Conference*



*(l to r) Ross Wilson, Wayne Butson, Jim Kelly  
and Helen Kelly*



*Harbour's Super  
Fund Trustee and  
LE SAD Fund chair  
Roy Cowley*



*ONTRACK CEO  
William Peet*



*New Zealand Labour  
Party general  
secretary Mike Smith*

Conference report continued on page 6

## Thanks to ex-CTU president

Wayne Butson farewelled Ross Wilson as CTU president at a luncheon at Victoria University

**R**OSS WILSON is a life member of the Rail and Maritime Transport Union, an organisation that owes its existence as a unified structure, in large part, to his skills and commitment.

Ross first came to the notice of rail workers when, as a rising star with BellGully Law, he achieved some very good workers' compensation settlements for members of the NUR. His results were impressive, but so too was the way he dealt one-on-one with ordinary members.

He became the NUR's industrial secretary and in 1986 left to become national secretary of the New Zealand Harbour Workers' Union. His formidable legal skills, combined with his empathy for rank and file workers, engendered a pride among members in having a leader who 'knew his stuff'. Ross had the intellect and foresight to anticipate the potential effects of such developments as the Labour Relations Act and the restructuring of the port industry which would have had far greater impact on port workers without his ability to predict, plan, educate and organise around the need to strengthen agreements and protect jobs and conditions.

He used all of his intellect and skills to achieve the very best for the workers he represented. One colleague recalls the impact of his steely stare at negotiations or in court, saying: "This was fair warning to liars and twisters of the truth that they would not get away with it."

In 1995, the amalgamation of the rail unions CURE and NUR with the Harbour Workers Union to form the RMTU, owed much to Ross' leadership and integrity.

The level of trust and honesty he built, and his belief in the importance of unity, helped smooth the historic differences that could have blown the deal up. Regrettably, his vision of a single national transport union, despite his enthusiasm, has yet to be achieved.

Perhaps his greatest legacy for port and rail workers was his drive for workplace health and safety. Having dealt first hand, early in his career, with some of the awful injuries caused by unsafe work practices, he refused to accept that death and injury were an unavoidable part of life in shunting yards or on the waterfront. He worked to create a culture

that put safety first, not just in legislation, but in the hearts and minds of workers. Without discounting his legal and industrial successes, there are, no doubt, fit and healthy workers alive today who would have been dead or dreadfully injured without Ross' dedication to this cause. 'Safety First' remains part of the RMTU's logo, and part of its culture.

Arising from that same safety legacy is the growing importance of Workers Memorial Day, which Ross keenly promoted. The ceremonies on April 28 each year, and the memorial stones and havens that have become a focus for workplace health and safety around the country owe much to this enthusiasm.

It is no surprise that he is moving to a role that will continue his life's work in the interests of preventing accidents and ensuring the best possible outcome for those who are injured – at work, or anywhere.



## Labour Party conference 2007



*The RMTU team at the Labour Party conference. (l to r) James Williams (Auckland), Phil Bosworth (Hutt Shops), Ian Wilkie (Canterbury), Wayne Butson (GS) and Aubrey Wilkinson (Port Tauranga).*

**A**S I write this two of our locomotive engineers are defendants in a five day hearing in the Wellington District Court. They are facing charges under the Crimes Act arising out of the 29 July "runaway" of 9 ZG wagons whilst they were shunting at the Waingawa JNL siding in the Wairarapa, just north of Wellington. They are understandably stressed. If found guilty the possible sentences include incarceration and heavy fines. If found guilty then the company, Toll NZ, is unable to indemnify the loco engineers against, nor pay any fine imposed by, the law. This is the reality of working within the rail industry under the much more onerous but appropriate Railways Act (insofar as it was inappropriate for a private company to essentially maintain a crown indemnity in the terms expressed under the Railway Corridor and Safety Management Act). What has been excellent to be part of, and to witness, is the very strong support and solidarity that has been shown by fellow members in attending the court daily. This has helped Steve and Danny immensely to deal with the situation. This case demonstrates the responsibility that members have in their daily working life and that when things go wrong they, and the company, will be held to account to defend what occurred. It is essential that you all work in accordance with the rules and report any malfunction or irregularity with the equipment you operate.

### ONTRACK relations

After living and breathing the systematic destruction and decline in the rail industry in New Zealand following its privatisation by the National Government in 1993 the RMTU, in late 2003, launched its 'Take Back The Track' campaign. It was founded on a desperate need to have the rail network operated in the national interest of the country rather than the commercial interests of, initially, American and, latterly, Australian owners. It was hoped that by having the rail infrastructure restored back into public ownership that all of the obvious benefits of rail transport, in a world of escalating fossil fuel costs and green house gas emissions, would be acknowledged and the need for massive reinvestment would begin to occur.



*Wayne Butson, general secretary*

The campaign struck a chord with members and the community and we were able to get more than 45,000 signatures on a petition in quick time. We developed a plan to have a local track gang build a railway line on the forecourt of Parliament – named "The Parliamentary Spur" – and ran a jigger up it with the petition boxes and handed them to Dr Cullen. Well, the rest as they say is history. The Government purchased back the network, re-branded the NZ Railways Corporation to ONTRACK and then re-insourced all the track maintenance workers.

All of this builds a distressing scenario when I am forced to admit that our WORST employer relationship within the rail industry is with ONTRACK.

The RMTU delegates and the assigned organiser refuse to attend Industrial Council meetings. They believe it would be a waste of their time as the company will not honour the deals it made or agreed to. They are obstructive on personal grievances and they fail to consult as required by the collective agreement.

We suspect they are following a deliberate strategy to frustrate and toy with the RMTU.

We have initiated legal proceedings on a number of issues and also industrial responses to unilateral acts by the management and the Board.

It is worth noting that the entire ONTRACK Board is appointed by the current Labour-led Government. It even has the pres-

ident of the Labour Party on it. We believe this Board is complicit in condoning anti-RMTU activity by ONTRACK management.

This is outrageous and depressing.

I am hopeful that eventually we will get to the truth through the legal discovery processes and uncover what strategy is at play. If we are correct in our suspicions then there MUST be changes to the Board and to the tactics of management.

It is a tragedy when you live to regret what it was you wished for!

### NMC

We have just completed our election round for the National Management Committee and welcome back some old faces (no pun intended) and two new ones. Albert Barr and Doug Blackie are the newbies and we welcome them onto the committee. The December meeting will see Phil Bosworth leave and Ian Wilkie retire. My sincere appreciation to Phil and Ian for the work they have put in over the years at the highest level of the Union on behalf of their peers. Enjoy the rest guys and, to Ian's wife Ros, I express my sympathy for having Ian at home all day – I jest of course!

### Staff

Our East Coast organiser Kelvin Rush has tendered his resignation to the Union as an organiser for personal reasons. Kelvin was our lead organiser for the Road Transport Organising Project and became a very familiar face to truckers in the region. Kelvin will remain a Union member as he is returning to his work on the waterfront. Thank you Kelvin for your efforts, on behalf of members. Enjoy the rest.

Christmas is just around the corner and so I will close in wishing all of our members, their families and extended families a happy, safe and joyous festive season and a 2008 that is what we would wish for together with the delivery of a worker-friendly, centre-left Government!

### Stop Press

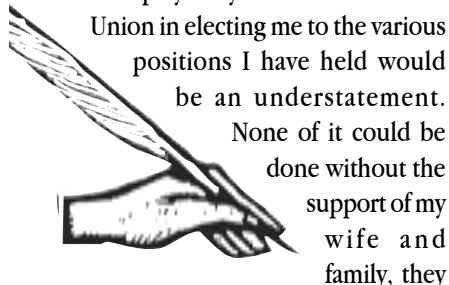
At publication time Danny Greene was discharged on all charges by the judge. We are still waiting for the Steve McIver decision.

# Union stalwart retires

Dear Editor,  
Farewell!

It is time for me to take my leave from the rail industry. My 38 years' involvement, with the exceptions of the fatalities which we encounter, have been humorous, interesting and sometimes exciting. I will not mention any individuals by name but suffice to say, I have spent time – a lot of time – with a lot of great people. I thank you for your company whatever role you have played.

To say I'm humbled in the confidence displayed by the members of this



Union in electing me to the various positions I have held would be an understatement. None of it could be done without the support of my wife and family, they are the ones who made the sacrifice over many years and I thank them. This thanks I extend to wives and partners of all activists within our Union.

This journey has covered such changes as from colza lamps to radio, from two men in the loco to remote control, to the bedroom on the back, to a tail end monitor, to a business which had a social conscience, to – well, a business, and be very sure, change will continue. We have come from five unions to one and that is for the better. The next step must be to consolidate with Australian unions with like interests and aspirations (the world is getting smaller).

The Union is presently looking at creating a situation where retired members can continue to be part of it if they wish. So hopefully this will not be the last you hear from me. I wish you all success, whatever your endeavours and may you have a happy, prosperous and safe future.

Long live the UNION

Yours sincerely  
Ian Wilkie

## Ready to fight another day

Dear Editor,

As most of you will know by now I have been unsuccessful in the NMC North Island general seat.

I would now like to take this opportunity to thank all of the membership, other national reps, full time officials, Wayne Butson and of course my mate Jim Kelly, who through the years I have been privileged to work with and represent.

Over the last eight or so years we have seen huge changes in the way we have to work and, in some cases, survive. I have seen this from being the mechanical representative in TransRail days all through the outsourcing of mechanical and infrastructure to where we sit today.

These changes in my opinion have not been for the benefit of the worker, as we have seen a lot of the traditional work being farmed out and in my role at Hutt, competing against fellow RMTU members.

This outsourcing has also been an attack on the RMTU as a whole. We have not been able to keep full unity within ourselves but it has been gratifying to see that we do fight well above our weight and have remained a modern, fully encompassing union.

So where to from here? I will not be out of any national office other than the NMC and give the UGL members a full pledge to keep focused on our employer.

There have been some very rocky moments with UGL and it is my intention to get the partnership working as one.

I wish the NMC all the best and give my best for them to deliver what we have strived to do over years.

I also give notice that I live to fight another day.

Phil Bosworth  
UGL, Hutt Shops

## Services to rail



*Harold Byrne, (above) receives his 20 year award and (below) Hayden Harwood receives his 10 year award. Both are presented by Trans Metro manager Ron Whiterod*



## Metro RCOs and TXOs get a TOLL uniform

After the exhaustive efforts of the local delegates and the Toll Operating Council, no less, the uniforms have started to arrive.

What should have been a simple matter of entitlement turned

into a three year mission. Yes, yet again Metro Wellington dropped the ball.

Pictured here, 'Lucky' Gibson decked out in the new gear.





President's report



# Eyes up for a critical 2008 election

**T**HIS year I will concentrate on the 2008 election and, I guess, the last seven years of a centre-left Labour-led coalition Government. I also remind people who seem to have forgotten, or were too young to remember, the 1990s under the right-wing 'fascist' National Government that attacked this country's workers, pay and conditions and at the same time tried to destroy the union movement.

Before the Employment Contracts Act (ECA) New Zealand workers were covered by occupational and industry awards negotiated by unions. Personal grievance rights for dismissal and unfair treatment were accessed through union membership.

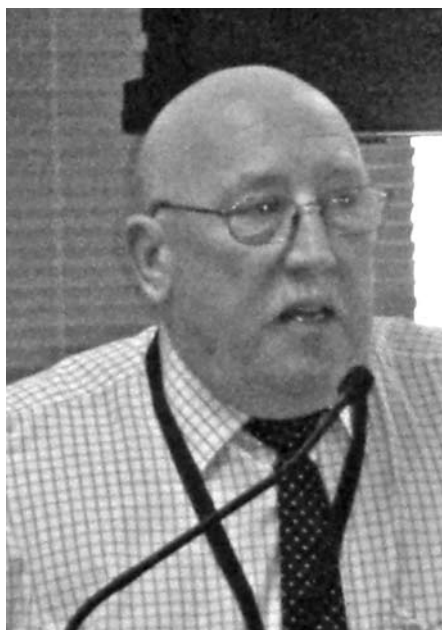
The ECA threw out the award system and replaced it with a system where the relationship between individual worker and the employer was central.

In the ECA the word 'union' was erased. The ECA was all about the individual worker negotiating with their employer. The worker could choose to be represented by a 'bargaining agent' who could be anyone from a lawyer to your next door neighbour or even your granny.

Almost overnight the ECA swept away awards ensuring minimum pay and conditions for thousands of workers. It created an environment supporting individual contracts over collective bargaining. It outlawed strikes for multi-employer agreements, supported 'take it or leave it' bargaining and undermined the role of unions.

Its impact was immediate and devastating. In 1990 the minimum pay and conditions for over 700,000 New Zealand workers was determined by an award or collective agreement. By the year 2000 that number had nearly halved to around 400,000.

Almost immediately workplaces were littered with fixed-term contracts, contracting out and other 'flexible' work arrangements. In this environment illegal 'sweatshops' sprung up and prospered. In case after case, work-



**This year Jim Kelly stressed the differences between National and Labour and warned voters that a national-led government will see their work and condition deteriorate**

ers were done over and exploited. A letter from a supermarket checkout supervisor to the department of Labour summed up the impact of the ECA on workplaces:

*"As soon as the Employment Contracts Act came in everything changed in this place and we were told by the employer he would do it his way. First he got rid of the union. Some were threatened that if they belonged to the union they would be down the road. Contracts were never negotiated; we were called in one by one and given a printed document with a place to put your signature some of the young ones were not allowed to take their contracts home for their parents to read. The first year all of us who already worked there got penal rates, as people left or were sacked, the new ones went on to a flat rate with no set amount. Eve-*

*ryone received different wage packets. Within a year there was a 90% turnover of staff."*

A downward spiral in quality of jobs and wages as the 'take it or leave it' workplace culture spread and the quality of jobs fell. From 1991 to 1999 growth in full time employment was 15.5% compared to 36% for part time jobs – including part time jobs for as little as one hour a week.

The numbers of 'working poor' dramatically increased as countless jobs were casualised or reduced to very part time hours and/or contracted out. From 1991 to 1996 median incomes for wage and salary earners increased by less than 10%.

When the total loss of conditions and allowances was considered, the real impact was even greater. A study of supermarket pay rates showed that while real wage rates in that sector fell by 11% between 1987 and 1997 for those working Monday to Friday, those whose work included weekends had a 33% real pay cut.

Young workers suffered even greater cuts as new workers started under the ECA and 'grand parenting' of conditions created inter-generational differences. The intention, of course, being that those reduced conditions would eventually flow on to all workers. In most workplaces this is what happened. Both the port and rail areas of our Union suffered as a result of this grand parenting.

In 1999 a Labour/Alliance government was elected and the ECA was repealed and replaced with the Employment Relations Act (ERA). It couldn't have been more different.

A partial list of the Labour led Government achievements includes:

- A billion dollars on new hospitals and cheaper doctor's visits and prescriptions,
- Income-related rentals for state housing, 20 hours free early childhood education and thousands of additional teachers in our schools,

- Interest-free student loans and modern apprenticeships,
- Working for families & Kiwisaver,
- Four weeks annual leave & 14 weeks paid parental leave,
- Time and a half for statutory holiday work,
- 60% increase in the minimum wage and the removal of youth rates,
- ACC brought back into public control with our own general secretary Wayne Butson on the Board and recently retired president of the CTU, Ross Wilson, the newly-appointed Board chairman,
- Worker participation in health and safety,
- Increased wages for workers like nurses, teachers and aged care workers,
- The legitimate role of unions recognised through the ERA & the right to join a union and bargain collectively,
- The right to union education and meetings & the right to strike in support of multi-employer agreements,
- The right to keep your job when the company is sold or transferred, and
- The right to protection from being unfairly dismissed.

It is also very important to say that unions have played a large role in these achievements. From the industrial and political campaigns we have created the pressure for these changes and we have influenced how people vote to get a government that can and will deliver them. We have won things industrially that we have gone on to be offered as part of the minimum code of employment rights. For instance, we have campaigned for the removal of youth rates, the defeat of the 90 day-no-rights bill, we have trained a large number of health and safety reps, we have taken part in campaigns for high quality, well-funded public services and lots more.

As part of the union movement we develop our own policies and priorities on all the important issues facing us and we encourage our Union members and their families to be active politically. It is not only a right, but a responsibility for people to be politically active.

This includes taking part in the most fundamental of democratic acts, that of voting. Unions played a powerful role in helping people to get on to the electoral roll

## Acknowledgements

*Prior to giving his main speech Jim acknowledged a number of people:*

- *he welcomed delegates to the 13th National Conference and especially those attending their first conference and observers;*
- *he recognised the efforts of all the Union's voluntary and committed delegates, officers and activist members adding that the RMTU is strong and active only when its members are strong and active;*
- *a gave special thanks to Ian Wilkie on behalf of NMC for his work and commitment. Ian is retiring at the end of this year after 38 years service with rail;*
- *praised the efforts of the Union's paid staff including industrial officers Brian Cronin and Con Jackson in the Lyttleton office, Todd Valster and Henry Fagaiava in Wellington, Scott Wilson and Kelvin Rush in Auckland and general secretary and New Zealand IITF convener Wayne Butson of whom he said: "Wayne's involvement both nationally and internationally has had a huge impact on the RMTU's image and reputation for being a well organised knowledgeable and respected Union"; and*
- *thanked the two head office toilers who manage to make sense out of all the chaos around them, Leonie Stieller and Julia Harrison. He said: "You are both such a critical part of the success of this Union and while you tend to work behind the scenes be assured your efforts do not go unnoticed or unappreciated."*

in previous elections, and we must do the same again. In the last election one in five people on the electoral roll did not vote.

As an example look at the recent local government elections and the returns of voting papers around the country. I think we have a real worry that Auckland has voted John Banks back in as mayor with only 37% of the vote. How councils invest in local government services is as important to workers as how central government invest in public services! The Auckland rail system is a classic illustration of this.

Politics does matter. It impacts on our lives as working people and getting this message across is an important part of our Union's political strategy.

In the 2005 election unions were critical in turning out the voters in South Auckland which tipped the balance in deciding the election outcome. We need to do this again. We have to work with our members to make sure they are on the electoral roll that they understand the key issues and debates leading up to the election and those they are active in seeking answers from candidates on the issues that matter most to them.

This includes setting out our aspirations for work and securing political commitments to them. Issues like pay, training, industry agreements, reducing hour of work and work stability, reducing casualisation. Work is important to us. We spend our life time doing it; we want it to be interesting, provide opportunities and provide decent pay.

Also as working people we all have lives outside of work so protecting and enhancing workers rights and stronger public services as well as higher wages, are the planks of our political strategy.

There is certainly been good progress made but there is still a long hard road ahead

I am sure that New Zealanders don't want to go back to the 1980s and 1990s when the disparity between rich and poor grew faster in any OECD country.

It has been said that we want fresh political faces on our TVs. And the National Party has a fresh-faced new leader with a policy of agreeing, or appearing to agree, with many of the key Labour policies which have defined the political divide.

I say appearing to agree deliberately because it has always been RMTU policy to encourage our members to look past the rhetoric and reassurances, and examine the detail of the policies.

If you look at the National Party policy on industrial relations and other key work-related issues like ACC, nothing has changed.

The policy is to weaken the ERA and, in particular, to again remove the key role of unions in collective bargaining.

The commitment to the Mapp bill policy of removing all legal rights during the first three months of a new job will remain, which means stripping more than 700,000

Continued over the page

# Conference newbies



*Joe Henderson - Runanga rep - I have found conference enlightening, very informative, great to meet other RMTU people and I look forward to networking with them in future. I have gained a better understanding of organising and will use that knowledge in the future.*



*Terry Duffy - Observer Hutt Shops - Conference has been interesting and I've learnt a lot, I look forward to bringing this knowledge back to our members at the shops.*



*Bob Johnstone - Conference delegate Palmerston North - I have a lot to learn. I enjoyed meeting other delegates from around NZ, I'm looking forward to delegate training.*

*Albert Barr - Observer Waikato - Conference was fantastic. Well structured, great to network with genuine people*



## President's report continued

New Zealanders every year of their legal rights to unfair dismissal.

National has made very strong statements about cutting public expenditure and we have seen from the past that that means cuts for public services, education and health including increased GP fees. There is talk of privatisation of SOEs and ACC.

Most important, it is still not clear whether National will respect the role of unions as social partners in a modern democratic society.

So in the interest of providing a fresh face for voters are we heading for a return to the 1990s if National is elected next year?

Those of us with longer memories will remember the 'decent society' National campaigned for in 1990. We mustn't be conned again.

It is for you, and our members and the wider working community to take stock of what has been achieved over the past eight years and whether all that is at risk with a

change of government.

Yes it is a hard road finding the perfect Government but it would be without foresight and without hindsight not to compare this last eight years with the previous eight and to spot the differences.

We face some serious political choices next year. It is critically important to re-elect the Labour-led Government to allow them to continue building its social/democratic programme – and the chance to continue to rebuild the trade union movement.



## CONFERENCE



*Malcolm Arthur - Observer Otago Port - Excellent, informative, I was impressed with the Australian guests - keen to come back.*



*Jonathan Kopu - Observer Auckland rail - I have been a delegate for two months so conference has been a great learning experience for me. Good to meet and get to know other RMTU delegates from around NZ.*



*Rob Stone - Conference delegate Taranaki rail - Brilliant conference, I have enjoyed all the speakers, good discussions with other delegates, a good time to set up networks with other branches.*



*Norman Eyre - Observer Lyttelton Port - Conference has been good, very educational and a lot to take in. I enjoyed meeting a lot of new RMTU people*



*Gaye Lester - Conference delegate Otago Port - I thought I would be bored but have not been. I was particularly impressed hearing how the Australians are coping with their struggle. Good range of speakers and I now have a better understanding of the RMTU.*



*Tony Devries - Observer Timaru Port - enlightening, communicative - I enjoyed the solidarity with others during conference and socially. We must never forget what our forefathers worked for - we must retain it.*

*Paul Foscett - Conference delegate West Coast rail - I found conference quite humbling, I'm proud to be the conference delegate for our members on the Coas*



*Shane McNae - Conference delegate Bay of Plenty rail - Great to meet other delegates including those from the ports and hear how things are going on their sites.*



*Paul Jensen - Conference delegate Waikato - I have found conference to be an enjoyable experience and am learning a lot. It was good to put the faces to the names that you read about.*





# HILLSIDE

**D**URING a recent visit to the Hillside branch general secretary Wayne Butson was given a guided tour of the workshop and, as a broken down ex loco engineer, Wayne says he really enjoyed seeing the 'lads' delivering miracles by turning rotted-out ex-UK passenger cars into stunning vehicles fit for transporting New Zealanders. To record their efforts Wayne took photographs of the latest batch of SD cars being worked on. Passenger feedback on these car-rebuilds continue to be very positive and is definitely a contributor to the massive growth in customer numbers on the Auckland metro system.

Wayne says: "These SD and the SW, SA passenger car rebuilds epitomise the can-do attitude which prevails within railway workers of 2007. Despite the privations of the Tranz Rail and Tranz Virtual years, RMTU members continue to come to work each and every day with a drive and determination to make rail succeed in New Zealand despite whatever management may do to impede it."



*Mechanical engineer level 4, Terence "Terry" Boylan*

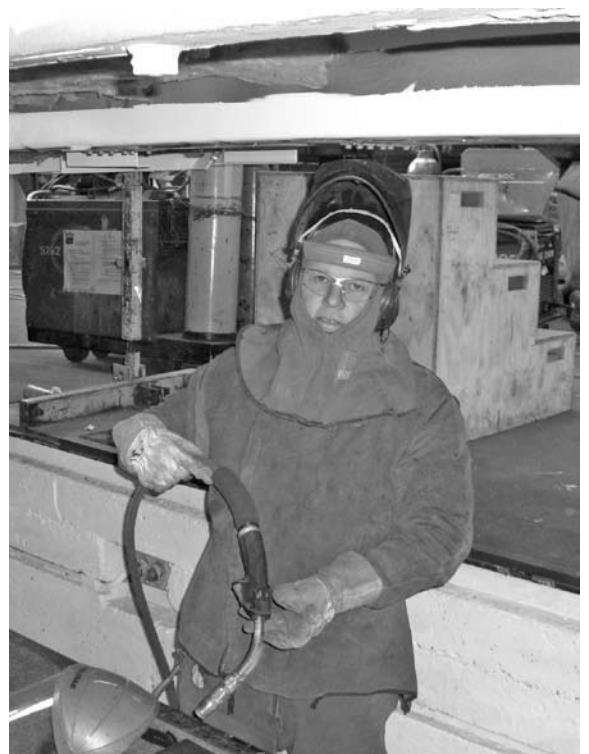




# SHOPS



*(l) Mechanical  
engineer level 3,  
Denis Ruka*



*(r) Mechanical  
engineer level 4,  
Peter Buckley*

## When vibrations are not so good

By Mike Regan

**W**ITHOUT the RMTU's 100 percent backing, it is highly unlikely that a 36-year victim of 'whole body vibration' would now be eligible for compensation from ACC.

His claim (for the purposes of this article and to keep his anonymity he will be known as George) for compensation - accepted by previous owner Tranz Rail - was fought to the bitter end by Toll. Without the Union behind George's claim, and without the Union instructing Hazel Armstrong Law, he would either have had to take the claim through the courts himself or flag the case away as simply too hard and too fraught with added pressure.

George's problems started when he joined rail over 30 years ago - only then he didn't know it and the stoic attitude of his work mates kept him quiet for years afterwards.

In retrospect, his lawyer Ben Thompson from Hazel Armstrong Law, said he believed the pain in his back, at first, started about five years after he joined up and which he attributed directly to the constant vibrations charging through his body every time he got in the cab of a loco.

As the pain grew worse, his capacity for work grew less until he could no longer bear the pain of driving - the only job he knew. He finally stopped driving in 2006 - about 23 years after he first noticed the pain.

Meanwhile, despite the stoicism of his col-

leagues, who mostly thought he should 'grin and bear it' just like them, he decided to act and spoke to his regional Union organiser, Todd Valster.

Following x-rays - which showed a degeneration throughout his lumber spine - George's GP lodged a claim with ACC on the grounds it was caused by all those years' exposure to whole body vibration (WBV) - a verifiable and recognised workplace hazard.

ACC accepted the claim which was partially based on evidence provided by an expert occupational physician and to a study by David McBride and Sara Paulin from the University of Otago in 2003. The McBride/Paulin study focussed on lower back and neck pain experienced by locomotive engineers when exposed to vibration. The then owners of rail, Tranz Rail, together with the RMTU assisted and supported the investigation and Tranz Rail accepted full responsibility.

However, the goal posts were moved when Toll took over. They negotiated an accredited employer partnership programme agreement with ACC which saw them pay lower ACC premiums. However, a condition for doing so is that the company must help with payments in the event of a successful claim against the scheme. The theory behind the partnership programme being that if a company accepts such a deal it will work to eliminate workplace hazards with its reward being lower premiums.

"Employers are happy to take the lower premiums," said Ben, who handled the case. "But they balk when it comes to paying out."

When George's claim was accepted by ACC, Toll balked and brought in their lawyers to fight it.

The RMTU handed the case to Hazel Armstrong Law and Ben.

"It was a downright cynical move by Toll," Ben said. "They knew full well their responsibility in the partnership programme."

Ergos Consultancy Injury prevention advisor, Monica Huisman, was employed to assess George's complaint and the state of the locomotives he rode.

Her conclusions were damning.

She made two trips beside George in the cab on two different lines and in two different classes of locomotives - one diesel the other electric.

Her findings showed that the only way George

could get away from vibration in a diesel locomotive was to leave the cab or turn off the engine. Even idling, the vibrations were excessive.

She also found the tracks caused the sway, the drivers chairs needed attention and there was insufficient recognition of the vast mass sizes of the locomotive engineers.

Overall, she said the electric locos had reduced any vibration and concluded WBV was unlikely to have caused George's back pain.

"Toll countered this to try and say they showed little concern for George," said Ben. "Their cynical report appeared grasping at straws."

In it they endeavoured to show that the problem could have been evident before he worked for rail (when aged 20 years) even if it could have started when he was riding on a farm. They also claimed that his initial speed didn't exceed 50kph, he had plenty of 'downtime' and that vibrations only occurred when he was at full speed.

Toll lost the case and while they hoped to appeal, George believes they can still quibble over the decision.

Meanwhile, George, who now no longer works for Toll, still suffers back pain. So long as he is active and watches his weight, he says, he can live with the back on the pain relief.

However, he says he is still waiting for the Union to fully honour the agreement with regular medical, occupational and vocational rehabilitation training would allow him to get an equally well paid job without vibrations.

In general, Hazel Armstrong said workers were far too complacent about workplace injury and recognising some of the more subtle hazards such as WBV.

"Because they creep up slowly and often they should be ignored or accepted as part of life," she said.

George says he knows of at least five other Union members still working in rail with similar to what he suffers.

"Meanwhile," says Wayne Butson, "we are waiting for Toll to make significant changes to the conditions that will see an end to this problem."

### Watch out for . . .

*The RMTU have compiled a list of possible symptoms which may be attributed to whole body vibrations.*

*If your work is mainly in the cab of a diesel locomotive and you are suffering some or all of these, the Union advise you seek medical advice.*

■ frequent and severe lower back pain. This is the most common complaint.

■ neck pain

*Other health effects believed to be linked with WBV include: disorders of joints and muscles; cardiovascular, respiratory, endocrine and metabolic changes; fatigue and discomfort; and impaired balance and vision.*





## Unjustly dismissed, but a fight for re-enstatement

By Mike Regan

**T**HANK goodness Hutt Shops team leader Kasia Kurene belonged to the RMTU the day she was fired. Without her Union colleagues and the backing of the Union head office she would have had a torrid time trying to get her job back.

In a dismissal which RMTU lawyer Geoff Davenport calls “extraordinary” and “ill-conceived”, Kasia – a respected team leader among a workforce of over 150 men – was summarily dismissed just five days prior to Christmas 2006, and a planned vacation to help her sister in Australia with a new born baby.

In the event it was Kasia who needed the help.

That the case was ever brought to court astounds Geoff who said “any reasonable viewing of the facts would have shown that the dismissal was ill-conceived”. That it continued to be doggedly pursued by her employer was unbelievable to him and beyond comprehension to RMTU general secretary Wayne Butson who said he continually expected the “ludicrous” decision to be reversed.

While the dismissal may have been ‘ludicrous’, Geoff says it is instructional for Union members and some clear lessons emerge.

Kasia’s ordeal began when United Group Rail (UGR) manager Michael Sarich asked team leader James Somerville to allocate some extra staff to the paint shop.

James said he was busy but would ask Kasia – which he did.

No sense of urgency was conveyed to James nor the number of people required.

Kasia was in the midst of a job – needing to copy

### With the Union as her advocate she had friends

and fax some plans – so while completing her task she considered who among her team she would approach and who could do the work safely.

Michael Sarich later interrupted her, including during her copying and faxing, to ask why the staff had not been sent. Kasia answered that she had to finish her current task but was already considering who to send. Michael approved her action but then went and spoke with another manager, after which he instigated a disciplinary investigation on the grounds that Kasia had refused to urgently send five people to the paint shop.

Kasia received the letter about the investigation and immediately took it to her branch secretary who then took it to Wayne. The Union didn’t hesitate to advocate on Kasia’s behalf.

However, the complaint was upheld by management and Kasia was summarily dismissed.

At this point Geoff was called in and brought up to speed. He tried to obtain an agreement to have her reinstated but UGR refused. He then took her case to the Employment Relations Authority (ERA) who immediately found in Kasia’s favour in an interim decision. This, at least, allowed her to return to work.

Subsequently, James reported he was approached by Michael Sarich who told him that his evidence had tipped the case in Kasia’s favour.

“This was a clear case of intimidation,” said Geoff, who added that it took everyone involved by surprise and had the effect of increasing the damages eventually meted out by the ERA.

Apart from being awarded \$14,000 for distress, the ERA added a further \$6,000 as damages for Michael Sarich’s conduct. This was on top of all lost wages, which were repaid to Kasia when she was reinstated on an interim basis.

“This is one of the highest awards of its kind,” said Geoff. “And while employers have 28 days in which to appeal a decision, UGR didn’t. You have to ask why not?”

Kasia was fully reinstated, though the stress she suffered, says Geoff, was huge.

In the final analysis, he adds, with the Union as her advocate she had friends, colleagues and, above all, a strong organisation behind her. Without that structure she would have been hard-pressed to mount the case and sustain it to a successful conclusion – despite the overwhelming evidence in her favour.



### Lessons learnt

- be in a union
- stick to your principles – Health and Safety are important
- get information from your workmates
- where possible, get instructions in writing

## ONTRACK



*A line up of Christchurch ONTRACK members' vehicles outside the Canterbury AGM*



*(l to r) Greymouth ONTRACK workers Evan Morris and Raymond O'Donnell*



*(l to r) Greymouth ONTRACK workers Chris Shaw, Paul Thomson and Dylan Smith*

ONTRACK  
Wellington  
workers on  
the job, (l to r)  
Lawson Candy,  
Caulton Newton  
and Patrick Toki



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## Update

### NIMT Working Party

**A**S part of trying to get the NIMT to be profitable Toll Rail have proposed to close down the Taumarunui depot – obviously a concern for our members based there but also of concern to LEs in both Palmerston North and Te Rapa. The distance between Palmerston North and Te Rapa is the longest stretch between two depots in the country so Taumarunui is key for providing assistance when things go wrong, as they do. Also, a locomotive was based at Taumarunui for banking purposes.

A working party comprises of LE reps (from Palmerston North, Te Rapa and Taumarunui) and Toll Rail management met several times to attempt to resolve the issue. It is fair to say that leading up to the last working party meeting the positions and views of each group were poles apart.

The working party met at Taumarunui on the November 8 where the RMTU reps

proposed moving work from Palmerston North and Te Rapa to Taumarunui and possibly Ohakune with the following benefits:

- Capacity when things go wrong;
- Less reliance on roster centre managing crew busts etc;
- Productivity and timekeeping improvements, potential cost savings;
- Less car running - safer and less costs;
- All issues (re 14 August 2007 Working Party meeting) would be addressed; and
- Potentially cost neutral.

It was agreed that the RMTU Reps proposal would be further considered and to progress this proposal, reps from both Palm-



*NIMT working party (l to r) The RMTU team: Steve Peacock, Wally Wallbutton, Les Perrin, Bernie Snook, Alan Robertson (Grant Henare & Todd Valster were absent) Toll Rail management: Ivan Johnston, John Sargent, Paul Watene, Robin Simmons*

erston North and Te Rapa would meet for two days to work on couplings and report back by December 8. If the coupling can work then no doubt the debate further down the line will be whether it is cost neutral versus working out the real costs of delay of late running, bustings and the lack of relief capacity.

Watch this space.

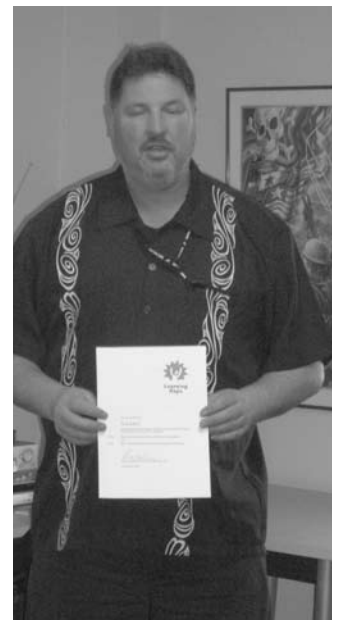
# Leadership in learning



*First graduates of the new workplace learning initiative*

**T**HE learning rep is a new representative role, elected by the workers in an enterprise to play a leadership role in encouraging workplace learning. It is an initiative of the NZCTU, funded through the Tertiary Education Commission as part of the tri-partite Skill NZ programme involving the TEC, the NZCTU, Business NZ and

the Industry Training Organisation. Learning reps who completed the first stage of their training were honoured at a graduation ceremony at the CTU. The graduation included reps from the RMTU, MUNZ and SFWU. The RMTU has been a strong supporter of the programme and a number of our port branches have lead in this initiative.



*RMTU ONTRACK and Runanga delegate Sam Kabui holds his certificate with pride.*

## AGMs



Auckland



Port Taranaki



Port Tauranga





## Life members

### Ian Wilkie



**N**ATIONAL RMTU vice-president Ian Wilkie, a tireless toiler for the union, was honoured with a life membership at this year's National Conference.

Ian will retire at the end of this year after 38 years in rail in Christchurch. His involvement as a union activist goes back almost as far when he became chairman of the

Christchurch Shunt Council. He was then elected to the national executive of the National Union of Railwaymen and became its national vice-president.

Ian was chairman of the Canterbury Rail RMTU branch and on the national executive for seven years – two years as vice-president.

He has a reputation for being uncompromising on health and safety after two of his workmates were killed in separate shunting accidents.

"The safety culture was bad," he recalls. "We had to do things a different way." As a result he was a finalist in the inaugural NZ Workplace Health and Safety Awards.

Ironically, he says the greatest gain he has seen for railway workers' families was

not anything the union achieved, but the decision to direct credit wages. "Until then, the pubs were getting half the wages. The wives didn't know how much their husbands were earning."

Ian was a founder member of two soccer clubs and is on the committee of the Richmond Workingmen's Club boxing section.

He has no plans for a quiet retirement, having proposed the creation of a veterans' section of the RMTU, which was approved at this year's conference. He says he also intends to give Grey Power a "shake-up".

■ Dusty Miller was also awarded life membership at National Conference. See TImaru branch notes page 22

## ICLS Bangkok

*The RMTU is affiliated to the International Centre for Labour Solidarity (ICLS) – a grouping of rail unions from New Zealand in the south to Japan in the north in a straight line up the globe. Ruth Blakeley attended the latest meeting of the ICLS in Bangkok as the New Zealand representative in early October.*

*Visit the ICLS website to read its objectives and activities*

[www.icls.or.kr](http://www.icls.or.kr)



## **AIL** of New Zealand

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year thereafter for just \$2.50 per year. There are no medical questions to answer and this is only available because you are a union member!

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and Cancer Protection.

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**0800 127 887**



# Pacific Fono

Other unions affiliated to the CTU and which were in attendance were EPMU and SFWU.

The course was facilitated by co-convenors to Komiti Pasifika CTU, Teresa Brown, from the Actors Equity Union, Stella

Issues covered were Tireti o Waitangi and how we can involve our Maori brothers and sisters collectively with Komiti Pasifika in the wider union movement.

Other topics covered were the challenges Pacific Islanders are faced with in the workforce, such as language barriers and cultural and religious differences and how to combat them.

If you are of Pacifica Island ethnicity and want more information about the Komiti Pasifika network and how you could become involved then please contact;

• Henry Fagaiava, RMTU organiser  
National Office, PO Box 1103,  
Wellington  
henryf@rmtunion.org.nz  
Mobile: 027-600-6581

## Porirua-Wellington

On October 2, RMTU delegates attended the New Zealand Council of Trade Union's Komiti Pasifika Cross Union Fono Delegate Training.

The RMTU delegates comprised of Hanipale Nouata and Jonathan Simi both of ONTRACK and based in the Wellington depot.

Teariki from the PSA and Henry Fagaiava from National Office. All three had just been appointed Komiti Pasifika's co-convenors at the recent biennial KP conference in Auckland in August.

The training covered aspects of being an active union member, both in theory and practical.

## Rail & Maritime Transport Union Inc Statement of Financial Position As At 30 June 2007

CURRENT ASSETS	2007	2006
	\$	\$
BNZ Accounts	246,210	287,879
Accounts Receivable	59,877	54,601
Interest Accrued	15,662	7,241
Tax Refund Due	-	2,194
<b>Total Current Assets</b>	<b>321,748</b>	<b>351,915</b>
<b>NON CURRENT ASSETS</b>		
Fixed Assets	162,269	174,290
Investments	2,045,800	1,920,269
<b>Total Non Current Assets</b>	<b>2,208,069</b>	<b>2,094,559</b>
<b>Total Assets</b>	<b>2,529,816</b>	<b>2,446,474</b>
<b>CURRENT LIABILITIES</b>		
Accounts Payable	128,537	105,587
Current Portion of Finance Lease	13,968	3,492
GST Payable	14,260	17,319
Konemu Provision	12,903	14,516
Income Tax Payable	308	-
Provision for Leave	65,791	60,962
Funds Held in Trust	25,124	23,124
<b>Total Current Liabilities</b>	<b>260,890</b>	<b>225,000</b>
<b>NON CURRENT LIABILITIES</b>		
Non Current Portion of Finance Lease	38,413	62,858
<b>Total Non Current Liabilities</b>	<b>38,413</b>	<b>62,858</b>
<b>NET ASSETS</b>	<b>2,230,512</b>	<b>2,158,616</b>
<b>MEMBERS' FUNDS</b>		
Opening Accumulated Funds	2,158,612	1,949,921
Plus Surplus / (Deficit)	71,900	208,695
<b>TOTAL MEMBERS' FUNDS</b>	<b>2,230,512</b>	<b>2,158,616</b>

## Philippines activist free

Update

In the last issue of the *Transport Worker* we reported that Philippines trade union leader, Crispin Beltran - aka Ka Bel, was being held in custody. Ka Bel, who is 74 years old, was released when the Supreme Court dismissed all charges against him and his fellow defendants without ever going to trial. In the six years of President Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo's rule over 900 left wing activists, church leaders and journalists have been murdered.

## RMTU Current Life Members

Bonar, H	Gordon, A D	Quinn, A P
Boyland, E	Grant, D S	Ross, W A
Buckley, L J H	Hanna, L	Ryan, C J
Burgess, D J	Harris, P R	Sabine, A R
Carmine, J N L	Hawes, A J	Sisarich, M
Carroll, C E T	Hocking, G	Smith, R
Carter, K E	Jenkins, I S	Spark, H E
Cheer, E T	Jocelyn, W	Stewart, B
Church, L A	Jones, L	Stewart, C W
Corliss, P S	Jones, N F	Swift, I C
Darling, M J	Kane, J J	Thompson, H
De Maine, A B	Kennedy, D	Walsh, J E
Dickson, E J	Lowndes, R D	Wilkie, J I
Donaldson, W R	Maxwell, R G	Williams, S V
File, E W	McLachlan, R J	Wilson, G K
Foran, Ted	Menzies, J M	Wilson, H
Fredericks, J C	Miller, D R	Wilson, J R
Frude, John	Murfit, J R	Winstanley, J
Gargiuto, G	Nobbs, T	Woodcock, R E
Gibbs, C G	Piper, R E	Woodward, F L



## LYTTELTON BRANCH

**I**T'S Collective Employment Agreement time again at the Port of Lyttelton. My, how the last three years have flown! Judging by previous extravaganzas, the prolonged and dreadful negotiating ritual will over run the April expiry date by months. The Lyttelton Port Company's directors showed the usual immaculate timing by awarding themselves a 10.7% pay rise just as we were asking members to come up with ideas for claims. Admittedly, the directors' pay rise this year was a little less extravagant than the 30% they gave themselves during the 2005 negotiations, but it still sets an interesting benchmark. The company's annual report shows a lower profit has been achieved on an increased container throughput. Our members achieved more – the company made less. Yes, those directors certainly deserve their money.

Members of the Lyttelton executive decided it was time to strengthen links with their counterparts at Port Chalmers. Frequent reports that the Lyttelton and Port Otago companies were "not, definitely not", talking about some sort of tie-up made it impossible to ignore. The visit to Dunedin coincided nicely with a social function to farewell some of the branch old-timers there. The road-trip home included a lunch

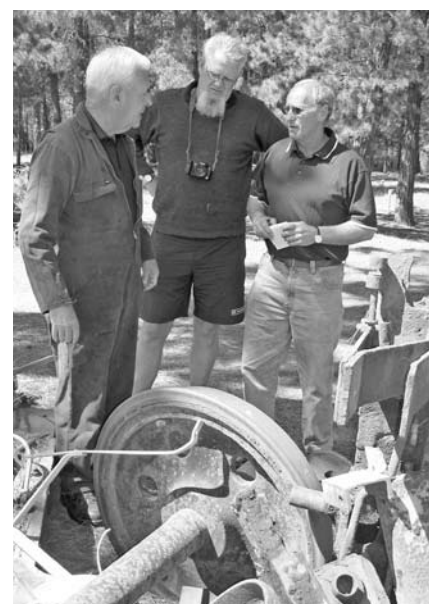


*Lyttelton branch executive members check the view from high on one of Primeport's shore-based cranes during a guided tour. From left: Mike Tasker, Brian Byas, Tom Lightfoot, Peter Clemens, Gavin Lockton.*

stop and catch-up with Timaru Port branch officials, followed by a tour of the port with branch chairman Peter Clemens.

Tony [Pablo] Rodrigues is the latest cargo handler to take the plunge and try life on the outside. He had worked at the port since he was 17 and decided 30 years was enough. Pablo is big, staunch, speaks his mind and will be missed as a long-time delegate and union supporter.

*A commemorative park bench at Lyttelton's Sutton Reserve will be mounted on a set of wagon wheels donated by the Canterbury Steam Preservation Society in memory of the hundreds of rail workers who have been part of the port's history. Pictured (l to r) Peter Harris, Paul Corliss and Hal Upton.*



Please cut on the dotted line

## RMTU ERNEST WILLIAM FILE SCHOLARSHIP<sup>the</sup>

**T**HE Ernest William File Scholarship was established in 1978 by members of the Locomotive Engineers Association as a tribute to Ernest William File, the retiring general secretary of the Association. The Scholarship was continued and expanded by the Combined Union of Railway Employees and the Rail and Maritime Transport Union has continued to support it on the same basis.

The scholarship is open to male or female applicants in two groups:

- ◆ those who are the children of a locomotive engineer; and

- ◆ those who have a parent who is a member of the Rail & Maritime Transport Union at the time of application.

### Three years

The scholarship is tenable for a maximum period of three years at any university or tertiary institution in New Zealand, by a scholar undertaking full time study for his or her first degree or qualification. The value of the scholarship is \$1500 a third of which shall be applied in each of the three years during which the scholarship is tenable.

Written applications may be made on

application form on the following page and should include details of your most recent scholastic achievements, career intentions, the names and addresses of two referees and sent to the address below before 31 January 2005.

The General Secretary  
Rail & Maritime Transport Union  
PO Box 1103  
WELLINGTON

## PORT OF NAPIER BRANCH

**I**NTERESTING times at the Port of Napier. Our collective employment agreement expired on the 30/9/07 so we are currently, to put it politely, exchanging viewpoints and ideals which at times, as we all know, brings out the best in people!

### Deep concern

It is with deep concern, looking at the wider picture for the union movement, that some employers, corporates and political parties here and across the ditch are deliberately by-passing some components of industrial law or, as in Australia, creating new laws to dismantle workers' rights under the guise of work choices in order to achieve more wealth for those who already have it. Similar to what happened here in the 90s with the National government's ECA – we must never forget. No doubt, if National returns to office (best not) there will be 'unfinished business' in terms of pulling apart that which has been gained by unions and a Labour-led coalition government.

We must be mindful of Australia's business footprint in Aotearoa with the likes of Toll, Progressive Enterprises and Spotless to name a few, who challenge Kiwis every day in their right to earn a decent living.

They continue to see NZ as an ideal country from which to extract profits. It's all about money.

At present in the NZ industrial environment there are obvious attacks on unions that we cannot ignore such as MUNZ with Ports of Auckland and within our own Union, the booklet given to members within the rail sector from ONTRACK. Today we learned that the Napier Port Company has given its stevedoring contract to ISO.

### Shock waves

Hawkes Bay stevedoring have held the contract for the last 17 years and is unionised by MUNZ. This recent move has naturally sent shock waves through the port; our sympathies go out to the staff.

We are all very aware of what these fake unionised companies bring to the waterfront and the negative effects that will come about with this sort of decision making. These companies undermine hard fought conditions and wages. There are concerns as to whose jobs they will take next with speculation that some of the break bulk operations are due for tender by a port user.

I guess it is a case of watch this space.

The employers are certainly rattling the

industrial cage, to put pressure on government and also sending a message to Mr Key and those of his ilk.

Being a novice in understanding the ERA and the wording that has been specifically scribed to explain such things as 'GOOD FAITH' to the average Joe, it certainly makes it clear that some of these employers have a different interpretation. If this is the case, such breakdowns will come with costs to both parties – and with outcomes that are unfortunate.

In attending our conference this year there is a genuine desire for us to build on grass-roots unionism.

In order to deal with the above notion, planning and preparing over the next 12 months as we head toward the next election are essential. Unions will have a major role to play in order to maintain work standards and build for a better future.

Recently we saw local body elections with apathy the main player. Hopefully this will not prevail in the 2008 elections. Fortunately we do live in a democracy, so it is paramount that everyone exercises that right, hopefully it is infectious.

It's about all of us, from the bottom of the triangle up. It's the base of the triangle which is the foundation which supports the whole. Play a part, get involved.



## ERNEST WILLIAM FILE SCHOLARSHIP APPLICATION FORM

Surname Of Applicant:  Christian Names:

Contact postal address for academic year:

Age (yy:mm):  Date of birth:

University/institute at which enrolled:

Degree/qualification(s) for which enrolled:

Student ID if known

Which year is this of your undergraduate study? (eg first, second etc.):

References (use separate sheets if necessary):

Latest academic results (Sixth or Seventh Form and certified copy of Bursary results) – attach copies:

Parents name & signature:

Loco Running

Non Loco Running:

Parents please indicate

Applicant's Signature:

Date of Application:



### HILLSIDE BRANCH

**H**I for the last time this year. I know, if you are like me, you will be thinking how the year has flown. This period has seen the end of the SW passenger cars for Wellington leave the site. Again a feather in our cap. They came in as rubbish and left a million times better. Achieving this has again demonstrated the skill and ability of our members. Also the last of the CE hopper wagons are going through the finishing stages. So now we are moving on to new challenges with the SE lights for Wellington's

commuters, as well as more passenger work for Auckland. So we continue to be busy work-wise.

This writer again had the pleasure to go to the RMTU delegates conference which again was very well run with a very good array of guest speakers. Again we were challenged in various areas of Union participation. The most significant one for me was around the up and coming national elections. Conference attendees were told, from an array of speakers, to get out there

and get involved in their local Labour committees. It is no good just moaning, there is a lot at stake this time. If you want a peek at what could be around the corner, in my opinion, then all you have to do is look over the ditch at the type of laws the Howard administration put in in the industrial area. National, if they get the chance, will go there too. Thank you to the people who put the conference together.

On behalf of the branch, all of our brothers and sisters in the RMTU, we wish you all the best for the Christmas, New Year period and Safe travels.

### TARANAKI BRANCH

#### The talk from Taranaki.

To start off we wish every one a Merry Christmas and a Happy New Year. The Christmas operations rosters have been posted which haven't been met with the usual Christmas Cheer from the ground troops. It's a shame, keeping in mind the goodwill shown when RDOs were moved around by management to fall on statutory days, for the staff to now get nothing.

A remit for the next wage round to get the statutory day's payment reinstated is on its way. Hopefully common sense will prevail here.

National conference: well what can I

say? What a fantastic experience. Some of the speakers and the different experiences they have encountered while walking the path to right the wrongs was riveting stuff. The Australian speakers in particular with their love/hate relationship of Johnny Rat and his Liberal mates was inspiring. It really does send a clear message to us Kiwis that a vote for National is a kick in the guts for the average hard working Kiwi.

Enough of the politics. Cycling season has hit with a large contingent of Stratford rail cyclists doing the Lake Taupo ride. Every year I wonder what the hell I am doing on the start line, just me and 11,000 others

and 160 kms to go. Best of luck to any other RMTU members doing the ride – it's character building to say the least. My thanks to Jack Waikawa and the crew from the NAKI who are covering our jobs.

Last week an invitation was extended to Wally Wallbutton from the Toll Operations Council to tour the Taranaki Rail depots. Guys, I thank you. It was a great turnout in all three depots. Rome wasn't built in a day and neither will your grievances be settled in one, but the meetings are a great platform to start off with. Wally was suitably impressed and so it was well worth the effort in coming up on his day off.

Have a great XMAS to all of you out there from the Taranaki Team.

### CANTERBURY BRANCH

**C**HRISTMAS is just a few weeks away and many are thinking of the holidays they are due. The fifth week that the Union has negotiated for will have kicked in with some staff getting another 2 or 3 days. If you are on an IEA did you get that fifth week or maybe the employer didn't want to give it to you? What is very frustrating being a member of the Union is that staff who are not in the Union use the CA as the basis for their own negotiations. They cite what Union got for its members and want that too. And it bloody happens. These people are FREELOADERS. They take the hard fought advantages but don't do the hard yards to get them. We find that many have plenty of talk – why not walk the walk?

Pike River coal is getting close and rail will play a major part in the transport of the 'black gold' from the West to the East coast. I have heard that ships which were going to transport out of Greymouth have not yet been built. So rail will play its part in the early stages of these 60,000 tons per year. Do we have the trains to pull it? Don't ask David Jackson. He said many years ago we were going to have new locos for the South Island coal route but they have not arrived yet. As these notes are being drafted there is something brewing in the next week or so which may have a significant bearing on the export coal rail route. Maybe Toll have ordered those locos? Or will they want out, sell up and head back to Aussie? When will

they pay for using the track? If you were a landlord and had a tenant like this you would have thrown them out ages ago. Toll have not delivered on their promises, but they seem to have enough dough for aeroplanes, being a shareholder in Pacific Blue.

So has everyone had a bit of a dab on their Kiwisaver? You know: Give your money away to these money institutions and hope it will be there when you are ready to retire. It is not government guaranteed. The parliamentarians are ok with their super, so why can't this working man's government give us the same conditions. It is not good enough Helen Clark. Do the honest thing and give us 100% security. How can we trust a Labour government when they can't give us some security over our savings?

And by the way have a nice Xmas folks.

### PORT TIMARU BRANCH

**W**ITH spring and the grass arriving our members have been busy. The highlight has been Dusty Miller's award of life membership. Dusty started at the port on the 1/03/1970 and worked in the works department as general dogs' body. He came from the British army as a paratrooper and their SAS. In his early days he was a port diver and spent a lot of time cleaning undersides of meat ships so that they could be faster and reach the UK before Christmas. From his earliest days he has been a port character who always tormented his incompetent superiors and always promoted worker principles. He then spent many years working on our dredge (the Orbell) then worked in all NZ ports. He was always a sup-

portive, active member and battled to improve conditions. Tragically, in 1988, the dredge was sold as all ports stopped dredging when they became port companies and the priority was to make workers redundant and make money rather than to develop their ports for the future. Dusty was caught in this and was made redundant. He was absent from the port for six years and returned as a casual worker.



*RMTU new life member  
Dusty Miller*

Since this time he has always been an RMTU delegate and our branch secretary for many years. He was made full time when he reached 60 as finally his vast experience and knowledge was understood by our new age management. He intends to retire next year to the Catlins. Dusty has been a model member all his life, always assisting other members at every opportunity. He is the heart of our Union being an active delegate and character. As we all know, without these members there would not be a Union.

### AUCKLAND BRANCH

**I**T has been a long time since an Auckland Branch submission, apologies from the executive. The Auckland Branch sends its regards to all members, past and present. It also wishes to acknowledge regional industrial officer Scott Wilson whose unceasing efforts are fully appreciated by all who have had the benefit of them.

Branch elections were held with Bernie Henare elected chairman, Mark Howard elected secretary and 27 delegates from 17 sectors elected from membership in the Auckland area drawn from six companies. Members are now well represented and are thanked for their support of recent and historical issues. Acknowledgements also to those who have given up their time and efforts to officially assist their colleagues. Thank you all.

The Auckland Branch has been active in all sectors. The rail industry in the Auckland

area is currently benefiting from development and growth at a previously unseen rate. Sadly the effects of the Tranz Rail/Beard & Co era linger, including increased branch activity due to the fragmentation of the industry and the lack of an active official industry regulator. Tranz Rail's efforts to decapitalise and focus on core business resulted in a variety of independent, government and privately owned companies, currently operating in the region, at times in competition for the same work. The branch navigates through a dynamic and constantly changing environment, engaging with the respective managements who not too long ago were mere internal company divisions. Established and reliable lines of communication no longer exist and segregation of the membership into divisions, employed by competing companies, is the result. Some would suggest that the empire builders of

old finally got their wish.

Resourcing issues are a recurrent theme throughout the different sectors and private companies. Some are experiencing compulsion to work excessive overtime to relieve their company's shortages. Options presented by the companies to the branch to help alleviate these shortages by urgently 'restocking' their workforce, include reductions in training standards and the further deskilling of professional certifications. It is the opinion of the branch that self-imposed staff shortages are insufficient cause to consider a reduction in standards of training and accreditation. The branch presently negotiates with private operators over training requirements and standards for practical application without official regulation. It anticipates similar exhaustive efforts in the future with newcomers and existing operators unless official inclusion in the process is formalised.

## Last Spike Centenary

**R**UAPEHU district communities will lead and coordinate the celebrations for the Centenary of the Driving of The Last Spike for the NIMT on Saturday November 8, 2008 with RMTU, TOLL and ONTRACK as their rail partners. United will be approached

to support this event, on behalf of the outsourced rail workers.

The Last Spike Centenary will commemorate the people who built the line, and the rail workers who have operated it since, with an emphasis on those who have lost their lives

or were injured in doing so.

Little has been written on the lives of the men who built or who have operated the NIMT nor has there been acknowledgement of the human tragedies they and their families suffered.

A quick searching of



### OTAGO RAIL BRANCH

**A**N esteemed locomotive engineer and past loco delegate Mike Vaughan retired on 9 November 2007 after 41 years of outstanding service to the rail industry in New Zealand. When Mike first joined the tenure was 40 years and then you were finished. For many (Mike included) this would have meant retirement at well under 60 years of age. Fortunately, in those those times, many stayed in the Government superannuation scheme (it was compulsory between the ages of 17 and 25) and it is now bearing fruit as Mike is able to retire and enjoy the next chapter of his life in good health and with a modicum of financial security along with his wife. They are planning a lengthy sojourn in Australia and then see where the winds carry them.

Mike was the loco delegate through some of the most difficult and radical times that the rail industry has been through. The RMTU and its predecessors were well served by Mike who was not only honest

and upright in his role but also a key motivator for the loco section. We wish Mike and Nola all the best for many many years of retirement.

ONTRACK had been keeping the local lads gainfully employed over recent weeks with continuing concrete sleeper lays. There have however, been some rather major derailments in the lower South Island that are providing some less-than-welcome added work.

One of the local track workers has joined the married men's club and we congratulate Barrie Crawford and wish he and his wife every happiness for the future.

Our Goughs Forklift delegate has suffered a serious accident (outside of work) and has shattered his ankle while gathering firewood – he fell out of a tree and landed awkwardly. We hope Steve recovers with all haste and returns to work soon.

All the best for Christmas from the Otago Rail Branch!



*Mike Vaughan celebrating the end of a long and glorious career and the start of a new and exciting era*

### PALMERSTON NORTH BRANCH

**H**ELLO from the sunny Manawatu! Yeah Right!

It's been an interesting last 12 months on all fronts with new staff, management prepared to sack and delegates busy on both fronts – UGL, ONTRACK, TRANZ LINK and TOLL RAIL.

Firstly we wish past and present members a joyous festive season, and it's surprising just where this magazine turns up! Secondly, a BIG welcome to all the new members that have joined our ranks, all the best in your new careers! And a big welcome back to those who have been on similar grounds before. For UGL they will relieve a depleted staff, for TOLL they are a most welcome relief in the yard roster.

Staffing issues have been our biggest concern along with every other depot I've

spoken to. But it doesn't just affect the rail system. Outside industry are also having a problem with staffing. Management have had their problems as well, but I have heard guys saying 'it's not our problem, it's their problem'. But when you take a look at the bigger picture it is across the whole country. Similar issues are everywhere. Trying to employ new staff isn't easy when only two out of 10 applicants can pass a drugs test. This seems to be a more significant issue. Putting your hands up and saying it's not your problem isn't helping when some TOLL employees are working excessive hours just to get the job done and to keep Fonterra's milk flowing. It then becomes our problem.

Then, you have other guys who have had enough saying 'no' to call outs or tack ons, with management then saying they are not

team players. And they wonder why Australia looks so good. Overtime is nice, occasionally, but family life is much nicer. We don't want to be working excessively every year. We can make suggestions on these issues but at the end of the day the bosses have to look into their wallet and to their budgets.

Nevertheless, staff moral at TOLL here appears to have improved over the past 12 months. We are just waiting for the next storm to hit

On a brighter note; I believe the ONTRACK boys are enjoying the comfort of the remote pack rather than sledgehammers.

Cheers Hillside, the new YJ wagons are a welcome addition. We hope to see upgraded EP's then no more 55 kph work trains. We are allowed to hope.

All the best for the 'silly season' to all.

newspapers from the period revealed 37 fatalities and five serious injuries in the central portion alone.

Families also perished. At Makohine, four children and a mother were killed after being

engulfed by a landslide. At Raurimu, a tree fell through the construction camp, killing a mother and her two daughters who were asleep within.

At some stage, these stories should

be told to provide a real insight into life without ACC. These workers will now be remembered. Much recognition is due to TOLL and ONTRACK for being so supportive of this cause.



**Wishing all our Union  
members a very  
Merry Christmas and a safe  
and happy New Year**

**From the president, general  
secretary, NMC and staff at  
head office**



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